Revolutionary Subjectivity and capital: On the “Book” or “Theory” of Wage Labor

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Abstract: Taking as its starting point the debate about the “book” or “theory” of wage labor of Marx, this paper seeks to shed light on the subject -apparently a marxologic one- with the purpose of a critical approach to the problem of revolutionary potential of the working class, to advance in its scientific comprehension. Following the proposal of Marx and Juan Iñigo Carrera, we hope to show the limits and implications of the two lines identified as dominant regarding the specified topic, to discover its purely ideological character in order to advance in an alternative solution to the problem.

Keywords: capital, working class, wage labor, class struggle, labor power, reproduction, valorization.

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The book of wage labour and the fate of Marx's work

This article takes as its starting point a recurring problem in the Marxist tradition: the debate surrounding the supposed book or theory of wage labor, which dates back to the second decade of the 20th century. As early as the end of the 19th century, Kautsky published part of the *Grundrisse*, where Marx explicitly indicated a series of "books" from which his work plan would be developed. However, it wasn't until the beginning of the second decade of the 20th century that authors like Wilbrand (Lapides 2008, 211), based on these notes and the commentaries in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (Marx 2011), pointed out the incomplete nature of Marx's work, assigning a partial place to *Capital* and relegating it to just one of a series of incomplete books. This starting point has been a persistent problem in the Marxist tradition ever since[1]. However, the importance of this issue lies not in a "philological" interest, but in understanding its significance for the determinations of working-class political action. What initially appears as a purely Marxist problem now emerges as its opposite: a political problem. As Starosta (Starosta, 2015) has pointed out, the problem of the revolutionary subjectivity of the working class is presented by several authors, including those discussed in this article, as transcendental or ontologically rooted. Thus, according to the Argentinian scholar, the foundation of revolutionary subjectivity—its historical potential—appears to exist outside the alienated forms through which the human life process is realized or affirmed; that is, it appears as determinations that escape the general social relation (Starosta 2015, 2-3). Ultimately, this subjectivity lies outside of capital and poses a radical antagonism that, in our opinion, ends up being nothing more than the inversion of the objective set by the authors.

[1] Following Wilbrand's text, Grossmann offers a rebuttal analyzing the development of Marx's work plans (Grossmann, 2013) and considering *Capital* an "essentially complete" work, thus establishing the foundations of the two dominant perspectives on the topic. Alongside this discussion, Grossmann also seeks to develop the problem of wages in line with his theory of capitalist collapse, engaging in debate with German social democracy (Grossmann, 1979). Years later, in the 1960s, Rodolsky would revisit the issue from a similar perspective, but mediated by a critique of Grossmann's work (Rodolsky, 2004). Rubel revived Wilbrand's perspective—without adding much further—in the early 1970s (Rubel, 2003), and it was further developed by Negri at the end of the decade (Negri, 2001). Finally, entering the nineties, the debate is reopened with the discussion between Lepides (Lapides, 2002) (Lapides, 2008) –closer to what Grossmann and Rodolsky did– and Lebowitz (Lebowitz, 1992) (Lebowitz, 2006) –more in line with Wilbrand and Rubel.

Despite their differences, the reviewed literature diverges from a common evolutionary point determined by certain assessments of *Capital,* both regarding its content and its place within Marx's overall work. On the one hand, there are authors who consider *Capital* to be only a part of Marx's complete works, arguing that he did not fully develop the determinants of wage labor, leaving this topic for a separate book that he, like several others, never completed. Beyond the strictly philological, the absence of this book implies that Marx's work is incomplete with respect to the determinants of the revolutionary subjectivity of the working class, leaving the door open to the search for or development of an understanding of this subjectivity that Marx's work does not encompass. On the other hand, there are authors who do consider that the "theory of wage labor" is contained within *Capital.* Based on an exhaustive analysis of the development of Marx's work, this second group is able to trace his intellectual trajectory and show how the original plan from the late 1950s changed and became what we know as *Capital* and its associated drafts, several of which incorporate themes that should have been addressed in the other books, had the original order been maintained. However, in these authors, the problem of the revolutionary subjectivity of the working class disappears, being formulated as a purely theoretical problem or without a clear connection to political action, something that distinguishes them from those who seek to complete the work under the urgency it imposes. We find both positions insufficient, and therefore we will seek to move beyond them.

a. The point is to interpret Marx

Within the first group of "theorists of the book of wage labor," Maximiliano Rubel stands out as an almost obligatory starting point for authors seeking to address the shortcomings of the master's work. Considering his work of re-organizing Marx's oeuvre, Rubel proposes an interpretation of Marx's entire body of work, seeking a relationship of continuity between his "early" and "mature" writings, all guided by the political struggle waged by the Frenchman against Stalinism and Marxist orthodoxy (Sartelli 2012, 13). Considering Marx's work "plans" outlined in the late 1950s and early 1960s, he points out, as mentioned at the beginning, that "the critique of political economy would occupy a pamphlet among the others" (Rubel 2003, 38). The plan of the "*Economics*" is something that Marx did not manage to complete[2], so discarding a book on wage labor is contrary to the original plan which, according to Rubel, is guided by a specific method that is inseparable from the ordering described in the work plan.

As is known, Rubel's interests lie primarily in engaging with official Marxism, questioning the "systematic character" of Marx's work (Rubel 2003, 39). Therefore, the bulk of his work is an attempt to organize Marx's writings in such a way as to develop an interpretation that recovers their original meaning. According to the Frenchman,

[2] Rubel says: "…now, Marx not only will not finish this ambitious project but, towards the end of his life, he will not even have finished his first "pamphlet", more exactly the first of the critical writings planned in his initial work plan" M. Rubel, Marx without myth, Barcelona, Octaedro, 2003, p 39.

> "It is true that faith in the "system" and its "foundation" by the two [Marx and Engels, GR] fulfills a very precise function in the spirit and behavior of the disciples who refused to take up the problem again where Marx had to leave it: it dispenses with questioning the philosophical foundations of a socialism called "scientific"" (Rubel 2003, 73).

For Rubel, Marx's project has been truncated by "the almost religious adherence of several generations of disciples to the fiction of a 'Marxist system' [which] has led to the death of the dialogue that the author of *Capital,* an unfinished and open work, wished to continue beyond the grave" (Ibid.). In this vein, where the problem lies in the interpretation of Marx, he cannot help but blame Engels as the first interpreter who closes or attempts to close the "system." According to Rubel, Marx's best friend is the "principal codifier of the Marxist *Weltanschauung*; Engels charted the course for epigones and future generations of adherents. Unwittingly, let us acknowledge, he enclosed and solidified a kind of system, an incomplete but fertile theory susceptible to deductions and developments" (Rubel 2003, 49).[3] Rubel, contrary to Engels and other disciples, preferred to continue defending the text against its false interpreters.

But Rubel goes a step further and seems to suggest that this "fragmentary" nature of the work—whose unity appears to be disputed by various interpreters—and its incomplete state as a "system," leads him to doubt the scientific nature of Marx's contribution to the development of the political action of the working class (Rubel 2003, 41). Furthermore, he indicates that Marx's project never managed to provide scientific proof of overcoming the capitalist mode of production, thus reducing Marx's contribution to an "ethical legacy."[4]

For Rubel, this postponement stems from the fact that " *Capital* had to be and continue to be *a book of economic sociology analyzing the role of the capitalist class in the process of material production; the other two books had to analyze the respective roles of landowners and wage laborers*" (Rubel 2003, 46). In other words, *Capital* is reduced to a book of "economic sociology," a book about capital and capitalists. Therefore, instead of a separate book on wage labor, in addition to this book on capital—this second part that contradicts the first—there would be a third book on land ownership and landowners. Hence, from this perspective, the whole appears as a tripartite relationship, where each form exists in relation to the other two, determined by its own laws. For Rubel, the working class remains a mystery. *Capital* says nothing about its determinants, so he cannot avoid placing the class struggle at the center, but in an abstract form: an ethical mandate[5]. In other words, this reduction of the working class struggle to an ethical horizon—an auto-Marxist legacy that he never abandons (Sartelli

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[3] Rubel, op. cit., 21.

[4] As he points out later: "And if he could not provide the complete scientific proof of the historical necessity of man for a human end and of society for a social end, he at least managed to carry out the demonstration, underlined every day by lived history, of the ethical necessity of a liberation that all utopias had dreamed of before him" Rubel op cit. 82. In a footnote Rubel treats Marx as "scientific theorist of the workers' movement" and "its ethical visionary", Rubel, op. cit. 91.

[5] See, for example, Rubel, Karl Marx: An Essay in Intellectual Biography, 2012 or Rubel, Reflections on Utopia and Revolution, 1968

2012, 8)—implies that it remains outside the determinants of *Capital.* From this, two things can be concluded: first, that the working class is a "subject" distinct from capital (that is, from its general social relation); second, the need to ethically ground the working class struggle, given its lack of a necessary connection to its own conditions of reproduction[6]. It should be added that this would also explain Rubel's arrangement of Marx's work, arbitrary according to some (Lapides 2008, 215), even at times when Marx himself could "agree" with his own text if it had to be interpreted (Sartelli 2012, 11).

By reducing Marx's "method" to "economic sociology," Rubel relativizes his scientific contribution and dissociates the revolutionary character of the working class from its material conditions, reducing its revolutionary potential to an "ethical" horizon. For the Frenchman, the "quintessence" of Marx's work—this method to which Marx seems to cling jealously—identifies the triad of "capital, land ownership, and wage labor" as central and, therefore, the relationship between the different forms described in each supposed book, opening the door to its subsequent development as an unavoidable necessity from the perspective of Marx's incomplete project, divorcing the working class from its general social relation: capital, thus substituting its material power with an ethical mandate.

b. Capital versus the working class

On the other hand, we have Antonio Negri. In a text that compiles a series of lectures given in 1978 on the *Grundrisse,* he presents his positions on this problem from a reinterpretation of what he calls the "global spirit of Marx's work" (Negri 2001, 20). Similar to Rubel's line of thought, for Negri, *Capital* presents itself as a partial exposition of Marx's entire body of work, calling into question its importance as the most elaborate point of Marx's research (Negri 2001, 20), and highlighting the need to advance our understanding of the determinations missing from *Capital.* This implies "bringing down" Capital to the level of other determinations, since *Capital* corresponds to the abstraction of "a part" of the issue. This absence leads him to a "reinterpretation" of the place of wages in Marx's study and to relativize the importance of his main work (Ibid.).

The monolithic character of *Capital* is not only overrated, but also flawed "by a categorical presentation that frequently limits and transforms its effectiveness. […] The objectification of the categories in *Capital* blocks the action of revolutionary subjectivity" (Negri 2001, 21). *Capital,* then, is a closed and monolithic work that not only leaves no room for working-class subjectivity, but also blocks the very possibility of its political action, unlike the *Grundrisse*, which, inserted within *Capital,* provides us with a clear understanding of the "antagonistic character of development" (Negri 2001, 32). In this overrated work, objectivism abounds, revolutionary subjectivity is absent, and only capital is present. Moreover, "*Capital* is simultaneously the text that has served to reduce critique to economic

[6] This fundamental difference between capital and the working class leads him to consider the autonomist arguments of the "self-activity" of the working class. See his note 62 (Rubel 2003, 92); under these considerations, it seems easier to understand that this external relationship is the foundation of his Marx as "theorist of anarchism" (Rubel 2003, 93).

theory, to annul subjectivity within objectivity, to subject the subversive proletariat to the dominant intelligence of recomposition and repression" (Negri 2001, 33). It now turns out that *Capital* is not only a part of the work, but also operates against the working class itself. Therefore, a book on wage labor would not only be justified from a philological point of view, but, given the reactionary form that *Capital* takes as a limiting factor on the political action of the working class, would be a political necessity. Thus, "the entire theory of capital could only be founded and developed from the modulations of the theory of wages, from what it alluded to, from what it contained." Furthermore, "the chapter on wages constitutes not only the implicit foundation, but the *very fabric of the development* of the Marxian theory of capital" (Negri 2001, 149). From this perspective, *Capital* would appear as a kind of introduction to the magnum opus: the book of wage labor.

Given this absence of subjectivity, lack of antagonism, etc., Negri seeks to recover the *Grundrisse* to find the rationale of the method, which he defines as "the theoretical-practical aspect of revolutionary insurgency" (Negri 2001, 16). Unlike in *Capital,* in the draft "[…] we witness […] an increasingly coherent forward movement of the theory, directed toward identifying the fundamental moment, which is the antagonism between collective workers and collective capital, represented in the form of crisis" (Negri 2001, 17-18). In other words, the *Grundrisse* accounts for an "antagonism" absent in *Capital* by integrating subjectivity into the analysis of capital itself, the principal factor in overcoming the capitalist mode of production as a general social relation.

Now, under the consideration of subjectivity, Negri rewrites the theory of surplus value, showing it as the meeting point between the objective analysis of capital and the subjective analysis of the working class (Negri 2001, 22). In this way, subjectivity reappears at the heart of capital, where "all the formal dualisms that are frequently discussed (theoretical analysis of capital versus politics, dialectics versus materialism, objectivism and subjectivism) are here burned and fused, so to speak, into the real dualism that constitutes, antagonistically, the process of capital" (Negri 2001, 23). In *Capital,* there is no place for the working class. Therefore, the way to resolve this lack of a book on wage labor, which arises from the need to develop and explain what this subjectivity consists of—a subjectivity that Marx considers to be within capital but outside of *Capital* —consists of "following the connection that conceptually approximates, through many fragments, the critical definition of wages to the revolutionary definition of communism and communist subjectivity. In short, it is a matter of conceiving at least the outline of the book on wages planned by Marx, grasping all its necessary articulations" (Negri 2001, 25). To make this journey toward the "articulations" of the book on wage labor, Negri will use the method designed by Marx in order to "aggregate" the revolutionary subjectivity of the working class (Ibid.).

For Negri, this idea of "method" can be summarized as follows: as subjective activity, it becomes part of the definition of the structures, which Marx describes unilaterally in *Capital*. As an irreducible part of the structure, subjectivity exists in relation to that structure, overwriting it through its own practice as free consciousness, independent of capital. These considerations are what position

the *Grundrisse* as an open work, because it is the application of this method that points to "the 'plural' universe of Marx's method" (Negri 2001, 25). These drafts, which insert subjectivity within capital, "represent the center of Marx's theoretical development, because they represent the moment in which the system in formation does not close itself off, but rather opens itself to the totality of practice" (Negri 2001, 32).

Given its vital importance, Negri begins to reconstruct the content of this book on wage labor; that is, he advances in the characterization of a working-class subjectivity. According to Negri, what Marx leaves out in *Capital*, by having dedicated himself to describing only part of the issue, are the specific determinations of the working class. Workers, as an antagonistic aspect of capital, cannot be reduced to it, so it becomes necessary to characterize them. Thus, "the valorization process, pushed into this totalitarian dimension, must make room for the emergence of proletarian *self-valorization,* for the expansion of its antagonistic potential" (Negri 2001, 146-147).

From this new perspective, the laws of capital emerge as appearances; what is found at the rational base is the working subjectivity, which must be characterized as opposed to capital, therefore, governed by different laws; by the need for self-valorization.

Negri points out that the subordination of the book on wage labor to *Capital* "is not true," "because all these elements should not be considered subordinate to the laws of capital, but to the laws of class struggle" (Negri 2001, 148)[7]. The opposing valorization between capital and the working class is now expressed as class struggle, which even has its own laws. It is clear that this antagonistic relationship, which sets in motion the production and reproduction of material life in its capitalist form, is expressed as a relationship of externality whose simplest and most direct form is the extraction of surplus value, the result of this tension between subjective and objective forces. For the author, "it is necessary to repeat oneself because the fundamental importance of Marx's discovery of surplus value (and the reductions that constitute it) cannot be exhausted in the book on capital" (Negri 2001, 148). Since the capitalist mode of production is governed by class struggle, it is necessary to move forward in determining the specificity of proletarian self-valorization (Negri, 2001, p. 146).

This clash of forces—the production of surplus value—expresses the point of divergence between two antagonistic poles. *Capital* characterized only one of these, capital itself, but omitted the second, labor power: "The labor that produces, labor power, is not an unmoved mover from which capital is created: on the contrary, it unfolds along all the articulations of capital, paradoxically animating all the objectifications of capital" (Negri 2001, 149). As a living, moving force, it appears to be an absolute barrier, a limit, to capital. Wages, therefore, represent the limit, the point of entry to this new force.

[7] The italics are ours.

Since the establishment of necessary labor is a product of class struggle, everything seems to indicate that it is use-value that resists, insofar as it has independent needs and its value differs from that necessary for capital. While one needs surplus value, the other, having its own independent needs, valorizes itself. It is a free being in relation to capital, contrary to the latter's drive for valorization. The working class appears as its antagonist. This essential independence in the development of its determinations is what places the *Grundrisse* above *Capital* (Negri 2001, 151).

The rate of surplus value represents the relationship between necessary labor and surplus labor. Each of these elements is presented as external. Necessary labor is irreducible because it represents the worker's need; surplus labor is the force of capital as a force that constrains and seeks to subjugate the working class. Therefore, “only necessary labor has this capacity to oppose capitalist valorization with a resistance that is its own preservation and reproduction” (Negri 2001, 154). According to Negri, “this subjective power is irreducible. Capital is forced to recognize itself as a relationship, as a proportion, as a rule imposed by a separation. The form of the relationship is, on both sides, struggle. The class struggle, politics, are now at the center of economic theory” (Negri 2001, 152). The irreducibility of politics placed at the heart of capital makes value an expression of class struggle, so that capital is a social relation that is defined, according to Negri's analysis, by organizing social production from a direct social relation that develops in its simplest form as opposing valorizations (Negri 2001, 155).

On the side of the working class, Negri sees the reproduction of labor power, subject to small-scale circulation (Marx 1971, 195), as the moment of workers' self-valorization, assuming that "money is subordinated to self-valorization" (Negri 2001, 157). Since the worker seeks nothing but consumption, their reproduction implies their self-valorization, which is contrary to or antagonistic to that of capital. The worker has needs; this is the essence of the critique of capital: "Labor creates its needs and compels capital to satisfy them" (Negri 2001, 151). Therefore, "it becomes fully clear what Marx's book on wage labor can be" (Negri 2001, 152). For Negri, the development of workers' subjectivity places and restores lost labor based on wages to the center of Marxist theory. According to the author, “the theory of wages becomes the rule of development” (Negri 2001, 151). With politics restored within capital, “the form of value is pure and simple power of command, pure and simple form of politics” (Negri 2001, 167), that is, the result of a direct social relationship.

To “save” the working class, Negri loses sight of the specificity of the capitalist mode of production, distorting the problem of the value of labor power and its reproduction. He reduces valorization to an external power dynamic, a concrete form that class struggle takes: on one side, capital with its need for valorization; on the other, the workers who produce with a view to their self-valorization outside of production. The result of this antagonism appears in its simplest form as the rate of surplus value. In this way, the rate of surplus value—which is formed as a result of the degree of exploitation in production—depends on the correlation of forces; therefore, class struggle precedes valorization. Politics, a direct relationship between personifications, is placed at the center of the theory and explains wage labor as the product of a pure correlation of forces, as opposing forms of

valorization, the fruit of pure antagonism. What is the value of labor power? What labor power can assert in its struggle to valorize itself. A mere tautology. From this perspective, Negri's reflection has a double flaw: it leaves the object it problematizes unexplained and reduces its content to a pure abstraction. Moreover, it reverses things by placing indirect economic relations as concrete forms of direct political relations; arguing that capitalist accumulation is not regulated by surplus value but by class antagonism. Again, the revolutionary character of the working class is understood as a relationship external to capital, deriving its strength from its own immediate interests that guide its self-valorization under a necessity opposed to its general social relationship, governed by an abstract free consciousness.

c. The political economy of the working class

Along complementary lines to Negri's, we find Lebowitz. Unlike the Italian, the Canadian attempts to advance a more complete description of the political economy that, according to these authors, Marx did not develop. In this way, he deduces ("dialectically") the need for a book on wage labor. Like Negri, he does so by following Marx's plans in the *Grundrisse* (Marx 1971, 29-30) or from what is quoted in the *Contribution* (Marx 2011, 3). In any case, he takes this hypothesis furthest, writing "a political economy of the working class," as the title of his book indicates (Lebowitz 2006). This need is based on a comprehensive interpretation of Marx's work, but more specifically, as a common starting point with the other authors, on considering *Capital* a one-sided work and part of a larger body of work.

Lebowitz aligns himself with several representatives of Marxism, such as Gorz, who argues that Marx's idea of the proletariat is not based on empirical observation; Castoriadis, who believes that Marx errs in understanding labor power as a commodity; Thompson, who sees in *Capital* a logic of capital, not of capitalism, thus neglecting social dimensions; and the young Marx, who criticizes classical political economy's reduction of capital to the perspective of capital (Lebowitz 2006, 81). However, unlike these authors, Lebowitz limits himself to considering *Capital* as the viewpoint of capital, not that of the workers (Lebowitz 2006, 84).

According to Lebowitz, this silence surrounding the workers, an expression of the "determinism," "fatalism," "reductionism," and "economism" of *Capital*, rests on one premise: considering the set of essential needs as given, without variation, as part of the work method implemented by Marx (Lebowitz 2006, 109). This is the starting point for the rest of the missing work. More specifically, it marks the beginning of the "book on wage labor" that would eliminate this premise (Lebowitz 2006, 110). He considers that, like Rubel (Lebowitz 2006, 87), the six-part plan of the *Grundrisse*, the quotations from the *Contribution*, and other scattered mentions in Marx's work regarding a book or doctrine of wage labor, presupposes its necessary consideration by Marx. But the most significant aspect lies not in the Marxist argument, but in his reading of *Capital* and its place within Marx's work. Lebowitz, like Negri (Negri 2001), but not explicitly Rubel (Rubel 2003),

suggests that the material for the book on wage labor is key to understanding Marx's theory (Lebowitz 2006, 115). According to the Canadian scholar: "*Capital* does not investigate the aspect of the capital/wage labor relation that involves the creation of new social needs for workers and on which 'the present power of capital rests'" (Lebowitz 2006, 119). It does not deal with the changes in the level of needs that can arise when the worker 'pushes against' the capitalist in the course of the class struggle. These are the kinds of questions that are not related to the analysis of capital as such, but were relegated to the 'investigation of wage labor in particular'" (Ibid.).

For Lebowitz, *Capital* is incomplete; it is only a part of the work. Therefore, it is a partial, one-sided work, a limited approach (Lebowitz 2006, 119). What remains to be developed is the aspect of wage labor, something that only appears latently in *Capital*. In this part of the contradiction, on the side of capital, the worker is not yet considered a subject (Lebowitz 2006, 146). For this, it is necessary to introduce the reproduction of the worker himself into the overall process. That is, alongside the valorization of capital, we find the reproduction of the worker. This second productive cycle, distinct from capital, would be governed by interests different from those of valorization (Lebowitz 2006, 135). While in valorization labor power appears as a use-value for capital, in the reproduction of the worker, capital, in its commodity form for consumption, is a means to itself. While in valorization the production process is oriented by the need to valorize itself, in reproduction the worker is guided by his own need.

As would appear in the work in question, capital and labor, through wages, are opposed as expressions of antagonistic needs, one as the sphere of production, the other as the sphere of reproduction. In the first sphere, labor generally becomes being-for-capital in production, but for itself in reproduction (Lebowitz 2006, 238). This outside of capital is the source and explanation of the contradictions that arise from capitalist accumulation. This contradiction appeared to be minimized by the author of *Capital*, as a way of perceiving the movements of capital as undisturbed as possible. However, by abandoning the assumption of invariable needs, all the conclusions drawn from *Capital* would be relativized or counterbalanced by this new field not addressed by Marx: that of labor power and its reproduction, upon which it is possible to develop a political economy of wage labor (Lebowitz 2006, 153).

Work, now a living variable, would then be expressed as the limit to the working day, the development of political struggle, and all tendencies that undermine the competition imposed by the dictates of capital, such as cooperatives (with their limitations), trade unions, etc., combating this intrinsic tendency of capital to divide the workers (Lebowitz 2006, 146). The material forces of the working class do not emanate from its "antagonist," but from human needs that do not correspond to the mere being of the wage laborer, considered an abstraction by Lebowitz, a reduction characteristic of unilateral (Lebowitz 2006, 233) or economistic Marxism that relies solely on Capital to extract the determinations of the working class, forgetting "this side" of the social totality, "the human." This series of needs inherent to "the human" are what resist being reduced to a mere personification. This

human being, always social, encompasses a series of needs, not only those imposed by capital or those not reducible to its valorization, but also social needs that are above the need for valorization, those that emerge, it seems, from the mere awareness of being oppressed by the valorization of capital.

Considering this deficiency in Capital, its one-sided nature, Lebowitz intends to use Marx's same method to fill in the missing piece. Through what the economist calls the "method of dialectical derivation" (Lebowitz 2006, 125), he attempts to continue this "derivation" toward the forms that would correspond to this need that resists being subsumed by capital. That is, considering the inconsistencies of Capital, Lebowitz deduces "dialectically" that there is an element that is not part of it but that needs, that demands something external to it (Lebowitz 2006, 133). A space where the worker belongs to himself (Lebowitz 2006, 141) and is considered a subject, whereas in Capital he never is (Lebowitz 2006, 146). Insofar as he is not a subject in Capital, a book about his own determinations, distinct from those addressed in the work, becomes necessary.

Earlier we mentioned Lebowitz's adherence to this interpretation of Marx, who he claimed had become captivated by the very political economy he criticized, developing a narrow view of the working class as existing solely for the benefit of capital. Echoing the criticisms of the younger Marx (Lebowitz 2006, 154), the Canadian scholar aims to develop a political economy that values the working class as the collective force driving capital, as its other, as that which capital must keep alive because it depends on it, but divided, because it manages to keep it subject to its need for valorization. The old Marx, the Marx of Capital, then, not only forgot half of the theory, but never broke with classical political economy (Lebowitz 2006, 188). Moreover, Capital—now a false critique of political economy—is a flawed representation of reality (Lebowitz 2006, 235) that can be reduced to the study of the logic of capital, separate from the working class (Lebowitz 2006, 283).

In this sense, like Negri, Thompson, and several other authors who see Capital as a reduced or economistic version of the working class, Lebowitz argues that the working class represents an absolute limit to capital, the other side of capital (Lebowitz 2006, 85). While Marx did not elaborate on what this side of the conflict consists of, Lebowitz's book aims to explore it. This other side of capital is presented as class conflict or struggle, that tension between two different (Lebowitz 2006, 153), opposing subjects, which undermines the entire set of relations, including wages. Wages are not determined by the value of the commodities consumed by workers, but rather by the force that labor applies in its struggle to appropriate more use values according to its needs, which expand along with capital. This historical and moral factor is the expression of the class struggle within Capital, since it is this struggle that defines the pattern of need (Lebowitz 2006, 205).

If this is the case, if it is indeed a confrontation between mutually external forces, we should ask ourselves about the power of these forces, where they derive their material capacity to exist. Apparently, based on Lebowitz's arguments, this question can only have one answer: their immediate necessity, the opposition of one pure "ought to be" against another (Lebowitz 2006, 146). On the one

hand, then, we have capital's immediate need to valorize itself; on the other hand, the need of workers striving to satisfy their independent needs (to valorize themselves, to use Negri's terminology). The problem with this, apart from what we noted regarding Negri, is that capital as a historical mode of production loses all necessity; it presents itself as an abstract antagonism that depends on the movement of struggle or, ultimately, on a general human desire that is nothing more than an abstraction when separated from its concrete social relation: capital. Like Negri, for Lebowitz, wages appear as the point of "contact," the concrete relationship between these two external forces. This implies replacing the content of the class struggle with a correlation of forces whose necessity lies in their purely antagonistic nature. As can be seen, this is once again a tautology. It is an inversion that places the direct relationship between personifications as the foundation of the general social relation (capital), and, because this is an external relationship, the revolutionary consciousness of the working class is reduced, once again, to a mere ethical necessity based on the immediacy of alienated consciousness, not as a necessary product of the development of the general social relation itself.

d. The unity of wage labor and capital

One of the essential references among the various readings on the problem of wage labor is Roman Rodolsky. In his best-known work (Rodolsky 2004), he dedicates several pages to the issue.

His approach is situated from a perspective that seeks to read and understand the *Grundrisse* in light of *Capital*, as a prior or less developed form, in contrast to the opinions of the three authors discussed earlier. However, his reading, like that of Lapides (Lapides 2008), is centered on a rather philological problem.

Thus, based on a comparison of the various plans outlined by Marx, Rodolsky argues that of the six books planned in the late 1850s, outlined in both the *Grundrisse* and the *Contribution*, the book on land ownership and wage labor was integrated into the former, where Marx addresses “capital in general.” More specifically, Rodolsky points out that the integration of these topics, which appeared separately in the plan of the late 1850s, was carried out in the manuscripts of 1864–1866, reducing the planned books to *Capital* (Rodolsky 2004, 37).

In this sense, the absence of the development of these themes in the *Grundrisse* is due to the structure of the original plan, which would change in the early 1860s (1862-63), integrating them. This idea is reinforced by noting that *Capital* includes even more topics that were not treated in depth in the *Grundrisse* or were only mentioned in these drafts from the late 1850s: cooperation, manufacturing, large-scale industry, primitive accumulation, etc., as well as the topics that a book on wage labor should include (Rodolsky 2004, 46).

This expansion of the original plan would entail not only the integration of the books indicated therein, but also the integration of the themes of competition and other forms that bring us closer to the surface of bourgeois society. In other words, it is this very expansion of capital, which moves from

capital in general to more developed forms, that leads Marx to integrate the book on wage labor into Capital, primarily in Volume I. Meanwhile, the other three pending books would be relegated to a later development (Rodolsky 2004, 50).

According to Rodolsky, the plan from the late 1950s would be a provisional model through which Marx developed the "pure determinations" (Rodolsky 2004, 68). For the Polish scholar, "…although they were abandoned as independent sections, their content being incorporated into the new structure of the work, […] the original strict separation of the categories was only a means of methodological abstraction and that is why it could be abandoned as soon as the main task had been carried out: the analysis of "capital in general"" (Rodolsky 2004, 69).

In our view, Rodolsky reduces the simplicity of the forms to "the common element" in all of them, which sometimes makes his understanding of the method and forms of "pure" capital confusing. However, despite this lack of precision, he understands that the other absent themes are the developed form of capital in general, such as competition, the formation of the rate of profit, etc.; all phenomena of circulation (Rodolsky 2004, 78-79), which are addressed in Volume III. This, while framed within the Marxist discussion, allows the author to establish the developed character of *Capital*—which is closer to the concrete forms of capital, to its superficial manifestations—in relation to the *Grundrisse*—where Marx focuses on the development of capital in general (Rodolsky 2004, 82). In other words, he integrates the books on wage labor and land ownership into *Capital*, but, more importantly, he points out the specific difference between simple and developed forms, albeit in an abstract way. In any case, neither a possible book on wage labor nor on land ownership would deal with essential forms but would be the development of what was already embryonic and more or less developed in Capital (Rodolsky 2004, 80-81).

Therefore, considering that *Capital* appears to be a developed form of what was outlined in the *Grundrisse*, the book on wage labor is integrated into Volume I because, according to Rodolsky, it expresses "a necessary intermediate link between the theory of value in Volume I and the theory of prices of production, to be developed in Volume III" (Rodolsky 2004, 85). But these changes in the plans, Rodolsky ultimately points out, also demonstrate that "the strict separation between the categories of capital and wage labor, as envisaged in the old plan, was only viable up to a certain point" (Rodolsky 2004, 91), beyond which the plan had to be abandoned.

However, we diverge from Rodolsky when it comes to a more precise consideration of these extensions of the original plan, the development of its more concrete forms, since he confuses the so-called "historical" parts of *Capital*—which are an extensive part of, for example, the section on wages, but also of the general law of capitalist accumulation—as illustrative moments rather than as the developed forms of capital. According to the author, "the essential results of the research that appear in the aforementioned sections […] could also have been presented without resorting to this illustrative material, which for years had been Marx's intention" (Rodolsky 2004, 90). On this point, we agree

with Caligaris in indicating that the parts Rodolsky identifies as “illustrative” correspond to the development of more concrete forms under which the necessity contained as potential in the abstract forms must be realized. Considering what the author discusses, the buying and selling of labor power, the exploitation of labor power by the capitalist, necessarily occurs as a class struggle (Caligaris 2012). Therefore, what Rodolsky calls "pure" cannot be reduced to its simple form and can only be understood as the concrete forms its development takes. Finally, we believe that this limitation in understanding the method reduces the scope of Rodolsky's observation by limiting the book's problem of wage labor to a "Marxological" topic, without advancing the determinations of the revolutionary potential of the working class, or at least rendering its relationship unclear.

e. Beyond the interpretation of Marx

Finally, we find Lapides, who, within the tradition of Marxist authors, appears to be the one who has most rigorously addressed the topic of wages in Marx's work. In his most extensive work (Lapides 2002), he argues that *Capital* contains the essential determinations of wages. Referring to what Marx outlined in Chapter XVIII of Volume I, where he analyzes labor time—one of the concrete forms that wages take and which expresses a formal modification of the “laws of wages” (Marx 2002, 661)—Lapides states that “those writers who point out that Marx reserved the treatment of wages for a separate work have apparently not noticed this observation” (Lapides 2008, 196).

Based on a review of *Capital*, Lapides believes that Marx has successfully created a “theory” of wages. Dynamic, complex, and comprehensive, it explains and predicts the various phenomena of wages, as well as the main trends in the capital-labor relationship (Lapides 2008, 207).

In his view, the expression “theory of wage labor,” which appears even in *Capital*, is reserved “for the purely phenomenal aspects of wages. The real ‘frictions’ as he called them, of the market, such as deception and coercion, are inevitable in the capitalist economy but are not intrinsic to its internal dynamics” (Lapides 2008, 208). This distinction between the phenomenal and the essential empties these forms of necessity, subordinating them abstractly to the “internal dynamics” of capital and losing sight of the concrete.

As we have already noted, Lapides aligns himself with the Marxists who reject the idea of absent labor, “declaring that the theory present in *Capital* and related texts is, if not literally, at least analytically complete” (Lapides 2008, 211). According to Lapides, this is due to an error in the interpretation of the transformation of the work's plan, which seems to have been reduced to the first of the six books proposed in the late 1950s; hence, the book on wage labor is missing, and *Capital* is reduced to an incomplete theory (Lapides 2008, 213).

Lapides traces the debate from Kautsky – who was the first to point out the divergence in the plans, but maintaining the finished character of the “theory of wages”; Wilbrand – who is the first to declare the incomplete character of Marx's work, one part of six; Grossman – who from a point

somewhat closer to ours, answers the second from “the internal structure” of *Capital*, but whom Lapides also criticizes (Lapides 1997); Rubel – who revives Wilbrand's arguments; ending with Lebowitz – to whom he dedicates a brief article (Lapides 2002) and McLellan – both maintain this idea of a missing book in the same line as Wilbrand-Rubel (Lapides 2008, 213-216). However, despite adhering to the idea that the foundation of wages is contained in *Capital*, he falls into the trap of Marxology: “To evaluate these positions, the best way is to first review the very evolution of Marx’s plan to write *Capital*” (Lapides 2008, 216).

Despite the Marxist character of the exercise, Lapides concludes –like Rodolsky– that “the capital-labor relation is at the heart of the analysis” (Lapides 2008, 221) and points out that it is in the early 1960s that Marx first developed the fundamental elements of his theory of wages (Lapides 2008, 222), confirming the abandonment of the original plan and its integration into *Capital* as a developed form of capital.

Finally, advancing the discussion of the political impact of Marx's scientific contribution, Lapides points out that Marx's theory of wages and wage labor has been an indispensable element in the working class's "ideological arsenal": "to pretend it doesn't exist is to try to disarm the workers by denying them this part of their legacy" (Lapides 2002, 233). However, we believe that Marxist analysis is insufficient. We maintain that Marx's contribution is not part of an "ideological arsenal" but rather the scientific development of the problem of wage labor. Marx's success lies in his ability to contribute to the understanding of the determinants of capital, whose development relies on the political action of the working class as its means of realization. Therefore, we must seek a more consistent answer to the problem than pure Marxism, moving forward in discovering the revolutionary potential of the working class, which can only draw strength from its own social relations.

1. The reproduction of labor power and capital

In our view, none of the previous works are satisfactory, either because they separate the unity of the working class from the general social relations, abstracting it from its own material conditions, or because, despite conceiving of unity, they reduce the problem to a Marxist discussion without addressing the issue of the revolutionary subjectivity of the working class. This is why a third position becomes necessary.

All social forms need to reproduce themselves; that is, they need the production process to be continuous (Marx 2002, 695). This implies, therefore, that of the total social output, a portion must be continually converted into means of production and another into labor power. However, this is merely a general statement, common to all modes of production (Marx 1971, 8).

In the case of the capitalist mode of production, the purpose of production is the production of value, and more specifically, surplus value, as a specific way of expanding the capacity to create this capacity to organize social labor as an attribute of the material product of previous labor (Iñigo Carrera

2013, 12). This valorization process is reproduced, in its simplest form, by reproducing the worker, on the one hand, and the capitalist, on the other, the former as the possessor of labor power, the latter as the owner of the means of production. In this way, by distributing the social product necessary to restart production, money capital is transmuted into constant and variable capital. The former is destined to become means of production, the latter, as the most important means of production of all: labor power, which, once set in motion, becomes living labor.

By subsuming circulation to the production of surplus value, the subsistence fund intended for the reproduction of labor power is presented to the worker as means of payment equivalent to a certain amount of value exchangeable for means of subsistence, which appear to him as a huge accumulation of commodities in circulation.

If we focus our attention on this latter process, we see the seller of labor power presenting themselves to the buyer with the only commodity they possess to participate in their general social relationship. Since this is an indirect social relationship mediated by commodities, circulation obscures the emergence of surplus value by presenting the value of their labor power as wages or "labor value." The very origin of this amount, as well as the portion pocketed by the capitalist, remains hidden from the worker's view. This gives the impression that, on the one hand, the wage comes from the capitalist's pocket and, on the other, the profit from the exchange of commodities sold at the end of the process. In other words, the amount of money that the capitalist disburses and exchanges for labor power appears as a mere quantity belonging to the capitalist and equivalent to the "labor value" provided by the worker. But, leaving aside the individual perspective, the direct confrontation between seller and buyer of commodities, the analysis of simple reproduction made by Marx, reveals that, behind the exchange of equivalents, where the capitalist only returns, in the form of wages, the work produced by the worker, there is hidden the appropriation of the surplus labor created in the production process that he puts into operation with the labor power under his control, as an attribute of capital (Marx 2002, 695-713).

This buying and selling process—which is repeated every time the worker confronts the capitalist as the possessor of money—occurs in shorter cycles than general circulation. Marx calls this circulation “small circulation” (Marx 2005, 195 ff.). Given the specific nature of the capitalist mode of production, the commodity labor power, and its circulation, differs from general circulation, which encompasses the entire period in which capital emerges and returns to the production process. Unlike the latter, “small circulation” “is continuous and occurs constantly and simultaneously with the production process. It is the portion of capital that is paid as wages, that is exchanged for labor power” (Marx 2005, 195). In this way, small circulation is what establishes capital as such, by subjecting labor power to valorization.

However, the constant repetition of this process implies the reproduction of the worker as something separate from the objective conditions of labor, which leads to the separation of the product

of labor from labor itself, a fundamental condition of the capitalist production process. In other words, as a process that reproduces itself, “capital produces its own conditions in its reproduction” (Marx 2005, 198), which implies not only allocating a portion of the product to the creation of more means of production (fixed capital), but also the labor power which, placed alongside the means of labor, revives them, giving rise to the production of surplus value.

From this perspective, since it is the general social relation that reproduces its conditions of production, the worker's consumption takes on a very different meaning than it did from the perspective of the individual worker. Now, considering the reproduction process as a whole, under its simplest determinations, “the capitalist class constantly delivers to the working class, in the form of money, allotments on a portion of the product created by the latter class and appropriated by the former” (Marx 2002, 697). But also, “the worker returns to the capitalist class these allotments and thus obtains from it his share of his own product. The commodity form of the product and the money form of the commodity disguise the transaction.” (Ibid.).

If we consider only the production process, the worker's consumption appeared as a process that takes place outside of circulation, as individual or unproductive consumption, "outside of capital." Now, from the perspective of reproduction, it appears unproductive only for the worker, while from the perspective of the reproduction of the general social relation, it appears productive for capital, not as surplus value, but as the constant renewal of valorization, as a condition of itself (Marx 2002, 198).

Therefore, while the worker may consume his wages unproductively, capital consumes him productively, so the worker's consumption appears as a necessary moment of its own valorization and not, as some claim, as the worker's self-valorization.

The importance of truly subsuming labor power under capital lies in the fact that, in doing so, capital appropriates the generic human process of labor, embodied by individuals, subjecting them to the needs of valorization. Labor power, which must be produced and reproduced, now does so in a specifically capitalist way, as it is the means by which capital valorizes itself. In other words, the generic capacity of human beings—embodied by individuals—appears to the free consciousness of individuals as an alien social capacity that subjugates them.

Their free consciousness, which mediates their individual consumption, appears detached from production, just as their subjection to the capitalist class as a whole is concealed behind the employment contract and the relationship with individual capitalists. However, the reproduction and continuation of the process only reaffirms the worker's real subordination to capital, as both a form and condition of capital, just as with the means of production. The worker, then,

> provides himself with means of subsistence, to keep his labor power functioning, in the same way that coal and water are supplied to the steam engine, oil to the wheel, etc. His means of consumption are thus mere means of consumption of a means of production, and his individual consumption directly becomes productive consumption. This, however, manifests itself as an accidental abuse of the capitalist process of production” (Marx 2002, 703).

Therefore,

> …the worker's individual consumption remains an element of the production and reproduction of capital, whether it takes place inside or outside the workshop, the factory, etc., inside or outside the labor process; just as the cleaning of the machine does, whether it is done during the work process or during breaks in it. The fact that the worker makes this consumption for his own benefit and not to please the capitalist changes nothing in the nature of the matter. Similarly, the consumption of the beast of burden remains a necessary element of the production process because the animal enjoys what it eats. The constant preservation and reproduction of the working class remains a constant condition for the reproduction of capital. The capitalist can confidently leave the performance of this task to the instincts of self-preservation and reproduction of the workers (Marx 2002, 703-704).

Now, not only does the worker's consumption appear as a necessary condition imposed by capital itself, but the worker's free consciousness itself is revealed as a concrete form of his alienated consciousness, the specific form that mediates his reproduction, and with it, the reproduction of capital (Marx 2002, 705).

Deprived of the means to produce his life, each time he leaves the production process he enters it, he possesses only his labor power, needing to reproduce it only to become subordinate to another. From this perspective, his individual consumption is unproductive; it generates no surplus value. But from the perspective of capital as a whole, such reproduction is productive for capital as a whole. Therefore, what appears to be the case from an individual perspective is reversed when capital is considered as a general social relation. As Marx points out,

> The individual consumption of the worker is unproductive for himself, since it only reproduces the individual full of needs; it is productive for the capitalist and the state, since it is the production of the force that produces the wealth of others" (Marx 2002, 706).

Therefore

> From a social standpoint, the working class, even when it is outside the direct labor process, is an accessory of capital, just like the inanimate instrument of labor. Even its individual consumption is, within certain limits, nothing more than a factor in the process of capital reproduction. But the process ensures that these self-conscious instruments of production do not abandon their position, and to this end, it constantly shifts their product from the pole they occupy to the opposite pole occupied by capital. Individual consumption, on the one hand, ensures its own preservation and reproduction, and on the other hand, through the destruction of the means of subsistence, ensures that workers constantly reappear in the labor market. The Roman slave was bound to his owner by chains; the wage laborer is bound by invisible threads. The constant change of individual master and the fictitious "juris [legal fiction] of the contract, maintain the appearance that the salaried worker is independent" (Ibid.).

This legal fiction, which has the contract as its simplest form (Marx 2002, 103), once its appearance is pierced, allows us to see that "the worker belongs to capital even before he sells himself to the capitalist. His economic servitude is both mediated and concealed by the periodic renewal of the sale of himself, by the change of his individual employer, and by the fluctuation that the price of labor experiences in the market" (Marx 2002, 711-712).

In this way, the capitalist production process has been defined not only as a process of surplus value production, but also

> The capitalist process of production, considered in its interdependence or as a process of reproduction, does not only produce commodities, does not only produce surplus value, but produces and reproduces the capitalist relation itself: on the one hand the capitalist, on the other the wage laborer" (Marx 2002, 712).

For most of the authors examined, this unitary process appears as something separate from capital, as the space for the worker's reproduction, carried out according to their own needs (or needs other than valorization). The working class is not a form of capital but is dominated by it, as an external relation, limited to appearances, prisoners "of the representations in which the agents of the capitalist mode of production move" (Marx 1972, 3-4).

To claim that capital expresses a "logic" or a "need" different from that of the working class is precisely to break this reproductive process, that is, to stop conceiving of capital as a unit, as the general social relation within which human beings produce and reproduce their lives, thus transforming the working class into an abstraction, leaving it powerless, deprived of its historical powers.

2. Beyond Marx and Capital?

Apparently, the attempts by Negri, Rubel, and Lebowitz aim to place the class struggle at the center of the issue, reclaim the autonomy of the working class, and distance themselves from "unilateral" or "economistic" perspectives. Both Lebowitz and Negri, drawing on the observations of Rubel and other ex- or "post-" Marxists, seek the limits of capital in Capital to trace the supposed great absentee of its magnum opus: the workers. However, they lose sight of the fact that the working class exists precisely insofar as it lives subordinated as an attribute of capital, which, as a general social relation, not only produces surplus value but also the human beings necessary to produce it. The real subsumption of the labor process to capital implies not only subordinating labor power but also the generic human life process, which appears inverted in the alienated workers as a power of capital. It is under the capitalist form that the general social metabolism is realized. We are then faced with the fact that the heart of the working class beats to the rhythm of capital itself.

By considering the working class's relationship with capital to be "external," they are compelled to seek an "outside" of the general social relation where the subjective potentialities that, according to these authors, capital denies, can develop, thus remaining trapped in an abstractly free consciousness. They seek to "escape capital" by analyzing wages to determine the relationship between the necessary and unpaid portion of the workday, assuming that its content is an abstract class struggle. Their very preoccupation with the affairs of the working class ultimately denies it its very condition of being, by separating the development of its revolutionary subjectivity from its material condition, thereby denying it its revolutionary potential.

Both Lebowitz and Negri expect the working class to achieve such strength that it can reverse the situation and, in the best-case scenario, dominate capital; or, in the worst, remain a powerless mob that wants to make a revolution without seizing power. Instead of being the concrete form in which the indirect social relation mediated by commodities regains its unity in the political form of class struggle, it is reduced to a simple external relationship, like the clash of two forces that find their needs in opposing, indeterminate ways. That is to say, as merely immediate antagonistic interests, unable to explain what they express as concrete forms in which the more abstract forms they contain are realized.

The problem of a book dealing with a theory of wages has gone from being a "philological" issue to a political problem about the objective interests of the working class, that is, about the powers that drive their struggles, the materiality they contain. As the premise goes: “It is not a question of what this or that proletarian, or even the whole proletariat, at the moment regards as its aim. It is a question of what the proletariat is, and what, in accordance with this being, it will historically be compelled to do” (Marx and Engels 1967, 102). Those social sciences that seek to justify the working class as an "independent" force that contradicts capital end up emptying it of content. For this “open” Marxism, consciousness appears as a point irreducible to capital, as free consciousness, as the mere immediate certainty of not being capital. Consequently, as sciences of appearance, these positions can be nothing other than ideology, expressing a content different from the one they claim to embody.

Capital, as a historical form that assumes the generic necessity inherent in natural human life, following its own valorization, must reproduce the conditions that make the realization of surplus value possible. As a private form of social labor mediated by the exchange of commodities, the simplest form of this relationship (the commodity) that emerges in the process of circulation develops as the constant reproduction of the separation between workers and capitalists, so that the former cannot have more power than that which their own social relationship grants them. That is to say, capital, as an alienated social relation, is the condition of its own overcoming.

According to Marx, the potential of the working class, its revolutionary character, is not contrary to the development of capital itself, its “antagonist” or its “other.” On the contrary, understanding what capital is means understanding the concrete way in which our general social relations are produced and reproduced, knowing what the process of production and reproduction of capital, as a continuous process of development of the productive forces, imposes, establishing the conditions for our own action. If capital continues to strive to develop and grow, seeking to definitively emerge from its chrysalis, it will have to “push” the working class into revolutionary struggle. However, by adopting these same social potentialities in an alienated form, this power cannot help but appear antagonistic to it. From this perspective, as Iñigo Carrera argues, Marx was the first to

reproduce, in *Capital*, this alienated consciousness aware of its own alienation and the historical potentialities it contains.[8]

However, this historical necessity is realized in a contradictory manner. The fundamental condition for a conscious organization of labor is the constant revolution of the production process, which materializes as new means of production. However, unlike what occurs in its manufacturing form, under the development of relative surplus value, it is the means of production that subordinate the worker as a mere appendage. The development of the generic human capacity for labor in its capitalist form, that is, as a means for valorization, is expressed as a permanent expansion of this generic capacity, developed as a series of concrete labors distributed across a number of individual capitals through which valorization is realized. These concrete forms, now forms of capital, develop as fragmented expressions of the search for relative surplus value, as competition among capitals. This same search for surplus value impacts the development of the material forces that determine the power of the working class, but also the capitalist class, each as a personification of the very development of this general social relation. Being a fragmented whole into a series of privately producing units, it finds itself in need of realizing itself as a direct social relationship that establishes the classes that personify those powers, that is, in the form of class struggle and makes the political action of the working class a condition for the realization of its potential and consequent overcoming.

Valorization, the driving force behind capital as a whole, develops the productive forces to unprecedented levels, concentrates capital, and positions the working class as the only subject capable of further developing such potential. It is not only the condition for its reproduction and development, but, by virtue of its very nature, becomes the lever for its overcoming. Therefore, far from being a purely abstract force, the working class becomes a link in the natural human process that unfolds through the appropriation of the environment and, in doing so, develops itself, increasingly relying on its own conscious action as a necessary means of realizing such potential. As Marx points out near the end of Volume I,

> No sooner has this process of transformation [imposed by capitalist property, which depends on wage labor, GR] sufficiently decomposed, in depth and extent, the old society; no sooner have the workers become proletarians and their conditions of labor become capital; no sooner can the capitalist mode of production stand on its own than the further socialization of labor and the further transformation of land and other means of production into socially exploited means of production, and thus into collective means of production, assume a new form, and consequently the further expropriation of private owners also assumes a new form. It is no longer the worker who

[8] According to Juan Iñigo, "Marx's Capital is in itself the development, realized for the first time and put into a form that allows its social reproduction, of the alienated consciousness of the working class that produces itself as an alienated consciousness that knows its own alienation and the historical powers that it obtains from it. In *Capital*, this consciousness unfolds until it reaches its general determinations that concern the revolutionary action of the working class in which these historical powers are realized, producing the material conditions for the conscious—and therefore free—organization of social life" (Iñigo Carrera 2013, 41-42).

> labors for himself who must now be expropriated, but the capitalist who exploits many workers." (Marx 2002, 952-953).

The need to reduce necessary labor to a minimum, by extending surplus labor time and seeking maximum valorization, is transformed, through its expanded reproduction, into a different form of organizing total social production. Valorization lays the groundwork for its own demise. Capital, as a form of organizing total social labor, gives way to a new concrete form, a new general social relation. This cannot originate from the outside, the product of an unpredictable class struggle whose advances and setbacks seem to condition the cycles of accumulation. The social process of production, which unfolds as its opposite, as a collection of private labors, is transformed, following its own necessity, into the direct organization of total social production in the form of class struggle.

In any case, capital, as its own negation, continually seeks to appropriate the worker's productive subjectivity, objectifying it in machines that displace more workers. Likewise, it uses all the freed-up time resulting from the reduction of necessary labor as time to create surplus value, intensifying the exploitation of labor and increasing the surplus population displaced by this very accumulation. But this does not contradict the fact that the political action of the working class is the way in which its potential is realized; it is the concrete form of its very development.

Unfortunately, Marx's death prevented him from further developing his analysis of the developed forms of value: the state and the world market, the former as the concrete form of integration into the latter, and the forms that class struggle takes as a result of these developments. However, reproducing these forms until we arrive at the action of the working class as the concrete manifestation of the realization of these potentialities is not Marx's problem, but ours. Focusing the discussion on what Marx might or might not have said about this or that developed form is pointless, unless it serves as an act of social recognition to establish an original starting point. However, its necessity is only explained by addressing these very concrete forms, moving beyond the appearances we encounter—the only way, moreover, to verify the validity of everything we have explored thus far. In other words, it is about advancing in the dialectical knowledge of our own political action through the virtual appropriation of the contradictions of current reality (Iñigo Carrera 2013, 274), ceasing to seek the need for the struggle of the working class "outside" of capital.